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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 PRISTINA 000608

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SENSITIVE  
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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE  
NSC FOR BRAUN  
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#) [KJUS](#) [EAID](#)  
ICTY  
SUBJECT: KOSOVO MISSING PERSONS FORENSICS HAMPERED BY LACK  
OF FUNDING

REF: A. PRISTINA 584  
[1](#)B. PRISTINA 480  
[1](#)C. PRISTINA 265

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. UNMIK's Office of Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF) is faces severe staffing and funding shortages which are hampering its ability to resolve cases of missing persons. Despite fewer leads on potential new grave sites, OMPF is still very busy with a few ongoing exhumations and dealing with remains returned from Serbia on June 30. OMPF will soon bring in an additional short-term forensics pathologist, in the hope that money requested from international donors will materialize. END SUMMARY.

OMPF URGENTLY NEEDS A SHORT-TERM FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) During a July 12 visit to the Office of Missing Persons and Forensics morgue in Rahovec/Orahovac, Acting OMPF Director Valerie Brasey told PolOff that OMPF will use remaining USG funding from 2005 to hire an additional forensic pathologist on a short-term (several months) contract to perform autopsies, write autopsy reports, determine causes of death and issue death certificates on the 140 - 150 bodies repatriated from Serbia on June 30 (Ref A). She said OMPF's one local and two international forensic pathologists are over-stretched, because in addition to their work on repatriated bodies (the condition of which she described as "a mess"), they must also handle fresh death cases, sexual assaults, testify in court, train local staff and assist with exhumations. She said that if there is an exhumation or one of the doctors is called to testify in court (as frequently happens), the work on the repatriated bodies must halt, which further delays their identification and return to families. She said OMPF has requested

assistance from the UK government, but said that even if that funding is approved, it will not arrive for at least several months.

#### REMAINS FROM SERBIA NOT EXHUMED PROFESSIONALLY

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13. (SBU) OMPF forensic anthropologist Oran Finegan said the condition of the remains repatriated on June 30 shows that the Serbian government did not conduct the exhumations professionally. As a result many of the skeletons are commingled. He told PolOff that usually two forensic anthropologists and two forensic pathologists would work together on a team to do the type of painstaking work he is currently doing with the bodies repatriated from Serbia. He said he must reconstruct each individual skeleton to determine which bones go to which body, and separate those that have been identified from those that have not. He said he x-rays each body for bullet fragments, finds and analyzes bullet entry and exit points and reconstructs bone fractures to identify injuries to the body. He said the vast majority of the bodies from Serbia have bullet wounds and evidence of blunt force trauma.

14. (SBU) Finegan said Serbian officials sent bone samples from many, but not all, of the repatriated bodies to the International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP) in Sarajevo for DNA extraction, analysis and identification. He is now working to ascertain which are which, and said he has so far sent 8 or 9 additional bone samples to ICMP for analysis.

15. (SBU) Finegan said many of the bags contain assorted parts that he now needs to try and match to either bodies that have already been identified and returned to their families, or to any of the over 500 unidentified bodies OMPF

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is already holding in six refrigerated storage containers outside the morgue. (NOTE. Finegan said that the refrigeration is not strong enough to keep the bodies from decomposing, since the decomposition process generates its own heat. END NOTE) Brasey said one of the bags Serbia returned contained as many as 14 identified right femurs that could match bodies OMPF already previously identified and returned to families or is holding in the morgue at the their request.

#### NO POINT TO EXHUMATIONS WITHOUT FORENSICS WORK

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16. (SBU) Finegan and Brasey both said that the forensic work is an integral part of the exhumation process, since there is no point in exhuming bodies if they cannot then do the work necessary to identify the bodies and return them to their families. Finegan said that while he can put the bodies back together, he is not legally qualified to write autopsy reports, make a final determination on cause of death, and sign death certificates. He said only a forensic pathologist can carry out those functions.

17. (SBU) Brasey said that OMPF has a forensic pathologist on standby in Sri Lanka, ready to come for two to three months (Ref B). She said that OMPF pays forensic pathologists 4,000 euros per month (which, she added, is one quarter of what they make in Europe). She said that OMPF already has salaries budgeted for Finegan and the forensic photographer through October out of the USG funding they have already received. Finegan added that although he has worked for OMPF since 2002 (and previously for the ICTY), he is planning to leave Kosovo when his current contract expires in October, and he cited uncertainty about funding as one of the reasons for his departure.

#### OMPF WORKING TO RETURN REMAINS TO FAMILIES

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¶8. (SBU) Brasey said OMPF's first priority is to return those 16 bodies (eleven from mass graves in Batajnica and five from Perucac) that were already identified while in Serbia to their families. She said OMPF has prepared the death certificates, autopsy reports and certificates of identification and "neutral" DNA match reports (per ICMP specifications), which will be given to the family along with the remains. She said the outreach team is currently in the process of notifying the relevant family member associations in Vushtrri/Vucitern, Gjakova and Meja in order to arrange handovers.

#### BACKLOG OF UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS HELD IN STORAGE

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¶9. (SBU) Brasey said the ICMP has processed all of the bone samples that the Serbian government sent to them, but only about 30 of them (16 sets of remains plus 14 femurs) generated identification "matches" and the rest ICMP returned as "unmatchable." She said OMPF does not have a clear understanding of what that means, but thinks it means that either the bone sample did not match any of the blood samples in the database, or it did not reach ICMP's minimum "threshold" of probability, which is 99.99%. Brasey (a mathematician by training) said that if only one family member gave a blood sample to ICMP, it is technically impossible for a bone sample to match the blood at the 99.99% threshold. She lamented that OMPF probably has bodies in storage that fit that category, and could be identified and returned to their families if the threshold could be lowered. Brasey said OMPF is trying to clarify these issues with ICMP at the sub-working group level (Ref C).

¶10. (SBU) Brasey said that OMPF continues to receive a slow  
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but steady trickle of DNA match reports from ICMP that provide DNA identifications for some of the bodies OMPF already had in storage (pre-dating the latest repatriation). She showed PolOff a random sample of the most recent batch of DNA match reports that OMPF has gotten back from ICMP, and the three reports showed that OMPF had submitted the bone samples to ICMP in December 2003, November 2002 and October ¶2003. She said she did not understand what criteria ICMP uses to determine which samples are tested first, or why it takes so long to get the results.

¶11. (SBU) She said that OMPF is currently processing the approximately 50 match reports that OMPF received from ICMP in the past month. She said that every match must be analyzed by the OMPF forensic anthropologist assigned to identifications, who compares the report to the post-mortem, ante-mortem, and forensic autopsy reports in order to issue an identification certificate. Once he certifies the identification, the outreach division of OMPF approaches the family members through the family associations to organize a handover of the remains.

#### OMPF CONTINUES WITH EXHUMATIONS

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¶12. (SBU) Despite a shortage of leads on locations of possible gravesites, OMPF continues to conduct exhumations. Brasey said they have solid leads on an gravesite in the Raska region of Serbia, along the administrative boundary line buffer zone across from Leposavic, and said OMPF plans a joint preliminary assessment of the site with Serbian authorities on July 28. She said they also have several small sites that are ready for exhumation, but OMPF is too busy right now dealing with the repatriated bodies to be able to deal with them. Brasey provided PolOff with OMPF reports on two recent exhumations, showing that OMPF exhumed a Kosovo Serb in Dojnica village in Prizren on May 12, and some remains suspected to be from Kosovo Albanians the village of Shushice, outside Gracanica in January 2006.

¶13. (SBU) On June 26 OMPF exhumed two sites adjacent to the cemetery on Dragodan Hill (close to USOP), but found no human remains. OMPF Forensic Anthropologist Oran Finegan told PolOff that several sources have verified that 12 Kosovo Serbs from Pristina are buried in the vicinity of the cemetery, but so far several exhumations have failed to pinpoint the location. Nikolov told PolOff OMPF discovers human remains at approximately 50% of its exhumations.

RE-EXHUMATIONS NEEDED FOR DEATH CERTIFICATES  
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¶14. (SBU) Finegan said that OMPF is also assisting Kosovo Albanian family members who request re-exhumations and autopsies of conflict victims who were buried immediately after the war without concrete identification and for whom no death certificates were issued. He said that the families need death certificates to sell property and to obtain war victim's benefits.

¶15. (SBU) COMMENT. Despite a shortage of new leads, OMPF is very busy making slow but steady progress on resolving missing persons cases. However, exhuming the bodies is only the first step. The bodies must be identified and returned to their families, and this requires intensive advanced forensics work. Without that work, the backlog of over 500 unidentified bodies being held at the morgue continues to grow, which only serves to upset the very families this process is designed to help. USG funding is targeted for both exhumations and forensics work on missing persons cases. This forensics work will include autopsies and identifications on bodies returned from Serbia as well as those exhumed in Kosovo. OMPF is doing crucial work at a

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crucial time, and returning the bodies of the missing to their families gives them some closure on the past and the opportunity to look towards the future. It is an essential pre-requisite to inter-ethnic reconciliation in Kosovo. END COMMENT.

¶16. (U) Post clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.  
MCBRIDE